

## F-10: Strategies for reducing unsafe abortion practice in Sri Lanka

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This paper examines the importance of various interventions aimed at reducing unsafe abortion in Sri Lanka, from the perspective of reproductive health care personnel. The 4 categories of strategies are: legal changes, working within the existing law; changes in family planning programme; and changes in sex and health education.

The data were drawn from a sample of 502 health professionals employed in 27 government health institutions in the Colombo District. The approach was based on the hypothesis that the attitudes of health professionals affect the outcome of strategies being implemented or to be implemented in future. The respondents provided information on perception towards the practice, views on abortion seekers, information on consequences and opinions on strategies.

A significant majority of respondents stated that they prefer the existing abortion law.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents suggested the need for providing abortion counseling. Establishment of sex and health education clinics at government hospitals was another suggestion by over 90% of respondents. Many respondents disapprove the use of contraceptives by unmarried women. Another useful recommendation was to improve facilities on abortion treatment at government health institutions.

It may be suggested that more liberal and knowledgeable health personnel are probably the best people to initiate any strategy that may reduce unsafe abortion. The health concern over the adverse effects of abortion has partly been overshadowed by the socio-cultural concern of the health personnel.

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